

# Paramedics

This document details suggested changes to the profession-specific standards for paramedics.

The PLG has considered the following information with specific reference to paramedics:

- (i) Registration Assessors' questionnaires (one comment made by one paramedic assessor, page 7).
- (ii) Visitors' questionnaires (one comment made by one paramedic assessor, PLG papers, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2006)
- (iii) Professional bodies' questionnaires (the response of the British Paramedic Association, pages 27 to 30)

This document incorporates the suggestions made in relation to the paramedic standards (where possible) and makes recommendations to the PLG for changes, where appropriate.

The profession-specific standards are shown in italics. Where the PLG is required to make a decision in relation to a standard, this is shown in the grey shaded areas.

The generic standards incorporate the changes suggested elsewhere.

## Expectations of a health professional

### 1a: Professional autonomy and accountability

Registrant paramedics must:

#### 1a.1

be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession

- understand what is required of them by the Health Professions Council
- understand the need to respect, and so far as possible uphold, the rights, dignity and autonomy of every patient, client and user including their role in the **preventative** diagnostic and therapeutic process

*- be able to practise in accordance with current legislation governing the use of prescription-only medicines by paramedics*

1a.2 be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner

1a.3 be able to maintain confidentiality and obtain informed consent

1a.4 be able to exercise a professional duty of care

**1a.5: be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement**

- be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the problem
- be able to initiate resolution of problems and be able to exercise personal initiative
- **know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional**
- **recognise that they are personally responsible for and must be able to justify their decisions**

*- be able to use a range of integrated skills and self-awareness to manage clinical challenges effectively in unfamiliar circumstances or situations*

1a.6 recognise the need for effective self-management of workload **and resources** and be able to practise accordingly

1a.7 understand the obligation to maintain fitness to practise

- understand the importance of caring for themselves, including maintaining their health

*- be able to maintain a high standard of professional effectiveness by adopting strategies for physical and psychological self-care, critical self-awareness, and by being able to maintain a safe working environment*

1a.8 understand the need for career-long self-directed learning

## 1b: Professional relationships

Registrant paramedics must:

1b.1 know the professional and personal scope of their practice and be able to make referrals

*- understand the range and limitations of operational relationships between paramedics and other health care professionals*

1b.2 be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with other professionals, support staff, patients, clients and users, and their relatives and carers

*- understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team*  
*- understand the need to engage patients, clients, users and carers in planning and evaluating diagnostics, treatments and interventions to meet their needs and goals*

*- recognise the principles and practices of other health care professionals and health care systems and how they interact with the role of a paramedic*

1b.3 be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team

1b.4 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, patients, clients, users, their relatives and carers

*- be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5*  
*- understand how communication skills affect the assessment of patients, clients and users, and how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of factors such as age, physical and learning disability*  
*- be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with patients, clients, users and others*  
*- be aware of the characteristics and consequences of non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by culture, age, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status*  
*- understand the need to provide patients, clients and users (or people acting on their behalf) with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions*  
*- understand the need to use an appropriate interpreter to assist patients whose first language is not English, wherever possible [not included in the dietitian standards]*  
*- recognise that relationships with patients, clients and users should be based on mutual respect and trust, and be able to maintain high standards of care even in situations of personal incompatibility*

**- be able to identify anxiety and stress in patients, carers and others and recognise the potential impact upon communication**

**Suggestion:**

be able to identify anxiety and stress in patients, carers and other, and recognise the potential impact upon communication (BPA)

**Decision:**

The PLG is invited to approve the suggested change as shown above.

1b.5 understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the patient, client or user

- recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of patients, clients and users

**Suggestion:**

be able to use effective communication skills in the reception and identification of patients, and transfer of patients to the care of others (BPA)

**Decision:**

It is submitted that no changes are necessary to this standard. The standards for communication, particularly 1b.4, cover communication skills with colleagues, patients, clients, users, their relatives and carers. The need to make referrals is covered in the existing standards in 1b.1 and in the proposed new standard 1a.5.

The PLG is invited to agree that no additional profession-specific standard is necessary.

## 2a: Identification and assessment of health and social care needs

Registrant paramedics must:

2a.1 be able to gather appropriate information

2a.2 be able to use appropriate assessment techniques

- be able to undertake and record a thorough, sensitive and detailed assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment

*- be able to conduct a thorough and detailed physical examination of the patient using observations, palpation, auscultation and other assessment skills to inform clinical reasoning and to guide the formulation of a diagnosis across all age ranges, including calling for specialist help where available*

**- be able to use observation to gather information about the functional abilities of patients**

**- understand the need to consider the assessment of both the health and social care needs of patients and carers**

### Suggestion:

be able to use observation to gather information about the functional abilities of patients understanding the need to consider the assessment of both health and social care needs of patients and carers and to ensure that the appropriate care pathways are accessed to benefit the patient (BPA)

### Decision:

The suggestions made in the text are drafted from the above suggestion made by the BPA. The suggestions are inline with the profession-specific standards already given for Occupational Therapists in the existing standards.

It is proposed that “care pathways” are implicit in the assessment of health and social care needs and in other standards concerning referral to other professionals.

The PLG is invited to adopt the changes shown in the text.

2a.3 be able to undertake or arrange clinical **or scientific** investigations as appropriate

2a.4 be able to analyse and evaluate the information collected

## **2b: Formulation and delivery of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs**

Registrant paramedics must:

2b.1 be able to use research, **clinical** reasoning and problem solving skills (and, in the case of clinical scientists, conduct fundamental research)

- *recognise the value of research to the systematic evaluation of practice*
- *be able to conduct evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically, and participate in audit procedures*
- *be aware of methods commonly used in health and social care research*
- *be able to demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving*
- *be able to evaluate research and other evidence to inform their own practice*

2b.2 be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills in order to make professional judgements

- *be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments*
- *be able to demonstrate a level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate to their profession*

2b.3 be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales

- understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different client groups distinguished by, for example, physical, psychological, environmental, cultural or socio-economic factors

**- understand the need to demonstrate sensitivity to the factors which shape lifestyle which may impact on the individual's health and affect the interaction between patient and paramedic**

**Suggestion:**

understand the need to demonstrate sensitivity to the factors which shape lifestyle which may impact on the individual's health and affect the interaction between client and paramedic (BPA)

**Decision:**

The PLG will wish to note that the existing profession-specific standards for dietitians include a similar standard which reads:

understand the need to demonstrate sensitivity to the factors which shape individual food choice and lifestyle which may impact the individual's health and affect the interaction between client and dietitian (2b.2, Dietitians)

The PLG is invited to approve the additional standard, as shown in the text (this has been reworded slightly to reflect the use of the word 'patient' rather than 'client' in the existing standards and in the paramedic profession).

2b.4 be able to conduct appropriate diagnostic or monitoring procedures, treatment, therapy or other actions safely, skilfully and **effectively**

- understand the need to maintain the safety of both patients, clients and users, and those involved in their care
- ensure patients, clients and users are positioned (and if necessary immobilised) for safe and effective interventions
- know the indications and contra-indications of using specific paramedic techniques, including their modifications
  
- *ensure patients, clients and users are positioned (and if necessary immobilised) for safe and effective interventions*
- *know the indications and contra-indications of using specific paramedic techniques, including their modifications*
- **be able to modify and adapt practice to emergency situations**

**Suggestion:**

- (i) One suggestion made by the BPA is shown on the previous page.
- (ii) promote and comply with measures designed to control infection (BPA)

**Decision:**

- (i) The PLG is invited to adopt the suggested profession-specific standard as shown above.
- (ii) The PLG is invited to conclude that the second of these suggestions is adequately covered by standard 3a.3.

2b.5 be able to maintain records appropriately

- be able to keep accurate, legible records and recognise the need to handle these records and all other [ ] information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines
- understand the need to use only accepted terminology (which includes abbreviations) in making [ ] records

**2c: Critical evaluation of the impact of, or response to, the registrant's actions**

Registrant paramedics must:

2c.1 be able to monitor and review the ongoing effectiveness of planned activity and modify it accordingly

- be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that helps to evaluate the responses of patients, clients and users to their care
- be able to evaluate management plans against treatment milestones using recognised health outcome measures and revise the plans as necessary in conjunction with the patient, client or user
- recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of practice and the value of contributing to the generation of data for quality assurance and improvement programmes
- be able to make reasoned decisions to initiate, continue, modify, **inform** or cease treatment or the use of techniques or procedures, and record the decisions and reasoning appropriately
- understand that outcomes may not always conform to expectations but may still meet the needs of patients, clients or users



## 2c.2 be able to audit, reflect on and review practice

- understand the principles of quality control and quality assurance
- be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures
- be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement
- participate in quality assurance programmes, where appropriate
- understand the value of reflection on clinical practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection
- recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review

### Knowledge, understanding and skills

3a:

Registrant paramedics must:

3a.1 know the key concepts of the biological, physical, social, psychological and clinical sciences which are relevant to their profession-specific practice

- understand the structure and function of the human body, relevant to their practice, together with a knowledge of health, disease, disorder and dysfunction
- be aware of the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment efficacy and the research process
- recognise the role of other professions in health and social care
- understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to, assessment and intervention
- *know human anatomy and physiology, sufficient to understand the nature and effects of injury or illness, and to conduct assessment and observation in order to establish patient management strategies*
- *understand the following aspects of biological science:*
  - *human anatomy and physiology, especially the dynamic relationships of human structure and function and the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, cardio-respiratory, digestive and nervous systems*
  - *how the application of paramedic practice may cause physiological and behavioural change*
  - **the main sequential stages or normal development, including cognitive, emotional and social measures of maturation through the human life-span**
  - **understand normal and altered anatomy and physiology throughout the human life-span**
  - **relevant physiological parameters and how to interpret changes from the norm**

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**· disease and trauma processes and how to apply this knowledge to the planning of the patient's pre-hospital care**

*· the factors influencing individual variations in human function*

*- understand the following aspects of physical science:*

- principles and theories of physics, biomechanics, electronics and ergonomics that can be applied to paramedic practice*
- the means by which the physical sciences can inform the understanding and analysis of information used to determine a diagnosis*
- the principles and application of measurement techniques based on biomechanics or electrophysiology*

*- understand the following aspects of behavioural science:*

- psychological and social factors that influence an individual in health and illness*
- how psychology and sociology can inform an understanding of physical and mental health, illness and health care in the context of paramedic practice and the incorporation of this knowledge into paramedic practice*

**· how aspects of psychology and sociology are fundamental to the role of the Paramedic in developing and maintaining effective relationships**

*- understand the following aspects of clinical science:*

- pathological changes and related clinical features of conditions commonly encountered by paramedics*
- the changes that result from paramedic practice, including physiological, pharmacological, behavioural and functional*
- the theoretical basis of assessment and treatment and the scientific evaluation of effectiveness*
- principles of evaluation and research methodologies which enable the integration of theoretical perspectives and research evidence into the design and implementation of effective paramedic practice*
- the theories supporting problem solving and clinical reasoning*

**Suggestion:**

(i) The changes shown overleaf are suggested by the BPA (professional bodies' paper, page 31). Minor amendments have been made so that they match the formatting of the existing standards.

(ii) understand the principles underpinning the safe and effective utilisation of equipment that is used for diagnostic, monitoring or therapeutic purposes in health care generally and in particular those devices which are used in unscheduled and emergency care of the paramedic in the clinical setting (BPA)

**Decision:**

(i) The PLG is invited to agree the changes shown in the text.

(ii) The PLG is invited to agree that the addition of this standard is not necessary because such matters are effectively covered by the existing standards (2b.4, 3a.2).

3a.2 know how professional principles are expressed and translated into action through a number of different approaches to practice, and how to select or modify approaches to meet the needs of an individual, groups **or communities**

- *know the theory and principles of paramedic practice*
- *be able to use the following airway management techniques, as well as knowledge of when and how each airway adjunct can be utilised to best effect:*
  - *endotracheal tube placement*
  - *laryngeal mask airway*
  - *needle thoracocentesis*
  - *needle cricothyroidotomy*
  - *oropharyngeal and nasopharyngeal airways*
  - *hand powered and battery powered suction devices*
- *be able to apply the following cardio-pulmonary resuscitation techniques:*
  - *basic Life Support for new-born, infant, child and adult patients*
  - *advanced Life Support for new-born, infant, child and adult patients*
  - *the use of both Automated External Defibrillators and Manual Defibrillators*
- *be able to apply the following fluid resuscitation and replacement techniques:*
  - *IV access*
  - *external jugular vein cannulation*
  - *Intra Osseous access*
  - *fluid therapy*
- *know how and when to administer drugs as appropriate, including knowing the*

*relevant indications, contraindications, therapeutic effects, side effects and dosages, and the relevant basic pharmacology, including the pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics*

- *know how and when to use the full range of immobilisation and support equipment in line with current care guidelines, across all age ranges*
- *know how and when to use the full range of ambulance equipment found on a typical emergency ambulance in line with current care guidelines, across all age ranges*
- *know how to deal with situations involving multiple casualties, including road traffic accidents and fires involving trapped or injured persons, and know the principles of major incident management*
- *be able to measure blood pressure using manual and electronic methods*
- *be able to undertake auscultation to assess respiratory, cardiac and digestive functions*
- *be able to give intra-muscular and sub-cutaneous injections*
- *be able to use blood glucose monitoring to analyse glucose levels*

**Suggestion:**

understand how to source issue, prepare, audit and administer prescribed drugs to patients, and monitor the effects of drugs on patients (BPA)

**Decision:**

The PLG is invited to conclude that drugs administration and monitoring of patients are covered in the existing standards (professional bodies' paper, page 32).

3a.3 understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment

- be aware of applicable health and safety legislation, and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these
  - be able to work safely, including being able to select appropriate hazard control and risk management, reduction or elimination techniques in a safe manner in accordance with health and safety legislation
  - be able to select appropriate personal protective equipment and use it correctly
  - be able to establish safe environments for clinical practice, which minimise risks to patients, clients and users, those treating them, and others, including the use of hazard control and particularly infection control
- *understand and be able to apply appropriate moving and handling techniques*  
- **understand the nature and purpose of sterile fields, and the practitioner's individual role and responsibility for maintaining them**

**Suggestion:**

A suggested change is shown overleaf (BPA)

**Decision:**

The PLG is invited to approve the change to the standards.

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